

To the Urban Sanitary Authority.

WANTAGE, BERKS.

GENTLEMEN,

It is again my duty to submit to you a Report for the year ending December 31st, 1900, reviewing the history from a Sanitary standpoint of the District of which I am Medical Officer of Health.

I purpose doing so on the lines suggested by the Medical Officer of the Local Government Board, in his circular letter, of December, 1900.

VITAL STATISTICS.

The area is 2,296 acres.

The geological formation is, in the Southern or hilly part *chalk*; in the Northern and low lying part, *upper green sand*. The population at the last census (1891) was 3,669, and calculated to the end of 1900 was 3,840.

The total deaths during the year, including the Workhouse, numbered 67, equal to a rate of 17.5 per thousand; excluding 15 who died in the Workhouse, the rate is 15.5, and deducting 6 dying in, but not belonging to, the district, we get a death rate of 12 per 1,000.

The births were 78, being at the rate of 20.3 per 1,000.

INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

The following were reported during the year:—

Diphtheria, 10 cases, no death.

Erysipelas, 22 cases, no death.

Scarlet Fever, 12 cases, 1 death.

Puerperal Fever, 1 case, recovery.

With the exception of *Influenza*, there has been no epidemic during the year, the cases having occurred at different times and in different places.

DEATHS FROM INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

Compared with the previous five years, the figures are as follows:—

	1895	1896	1897	1898	1899	1900
Typhoid Fever ...	1			1		
Diphtheria ...		3	2			
Influenza ...				2	5	3
Scarlet Fever ...						1
Measles ...				3		
Erysipelas ...		3				
Whooping Cough ...	6	1			3	
Puerperal Fever ...		2				

TYPHOID, OR ENTERIC FEVER.

No case has been reported during the year, which we may regard as evidence of the purity of our water supply. This disease, in England, is generally caused by the presence of *Sewage*, containing *Typhoid* germs, in drinking water.

DIPHTHERIA.

The cases reported to me were of a mild type, and were in different parts of the town, and not confined to one locality. Overcrowding and deficient ventilation appear to be the chief pre-disposing cause.

INFLUENZA.

This was very prevalent during the early months of the year, causing directly three deaths.

SCARLET FEVER.

Only a few cases were reported.

Prompt isolation in each case prevented the disease from spreading.

PHTHISIS.

Ten deaths were registered, or over a sixth of the total mortality.

It cannot be too strongly urged that the disease is conveyed from the sick to the healthy, especially in stuffy unwholesome dwellings.

PREVENTION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

For this purpose healthy surroundings are essential, pure water, light, dry, well ventilated dwellings, good food, temperate habits, and prompt isolation when a case occurs.

HOUSE ACCOMMODATION FOR THE WORKING CLASSES.

This is a subject on which the Local Government Board asks for special information.

The accommodation is certainly inadequate, but, with a few exceptions, the houses are fairly good.

The exceptions I refer to more particularly are those situated round a yard to the south of Stirlings Row; these houses are badly constructed, ventilation and light are insufficient.

In future I would recommend houses to be built on concrete, with good-sized windows opening at the top, and not to be crowded too closely together, so that light and air can freely enter.

DRAINAGE.

This being in a state of transition, I will defer comments, but it is satisfactory to note that during the year no disease directly due to *sewer* gas or *sewage* pollution was recorded.

DISPOSAL OF HOUSE REFUGE.

I would suggest to the Sanitary Authority that the boxes, or receptacles for refuse, when placed outside houses for the scavenger's cart, should have lids or covers to prevent the contents being blown about on windy days.

I would also suggest that during hot, dry weather, before the streets are swept, they should be watered; the system pursued last summer to a great extent simply displaced the dust from the road to the adjoining houses.

I may point out that inhaling dust is a fertile cause of some diseases, notably of consumption, the dust containing the germs.

WATER SUPPLY.

The water supplied by the Water Company is pure, with the exception of some chalk in solution; that from the wells, which are mostly surface, contain some organic matter, and the water is not as good as that supplied by the Water Company.

FOOD.

My attention has not been called to any case where unwholesome or unsound food has been exposed for sale.

OFFENSIVE TRADES.

None within the meaning of the Act exist in the District.

SUMMARY OF WORK DONE DURING THE YEAR.

Houses inspected	...	...	...	...	90
Drains, Sewers, &c., examined			...	...	56
Wells	...	...	...	...	30
Samples of Water examined	...	...	...	...	29

In conclusion, I may say that your Inspector, Mr. Belcher, has given me valuable assistance, and his action in dealing with Infectious Diseases and Nuisances has been prompt and effectual.

In compliance with the Local Government Board I have made systematic inspections of the District.

Appended are the usual Table of Statistics and Mr. Belcher's Report.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

THOMAS G. EMERSON, M.D.

Medical Officer of Health,
Urban District of Wantage.

Wantage, February 25th, 1901.

